

# The EAST HARTFORD Gazette

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## Speaking Out!

### We must not let the 'Greatest Generation' pay again for hardships of a war

**By U.S. Rep. John B. Larson**

(D) First Congressional District

We are a nation at war - a war the President has said may take years. He has asked for the nation's patience and perseverance in bringing the perpetrators of terror to justice.

A united nation stands prepared to make the necessary sacrifices and adapt to the heightened security that disrupts our lives. It is an inconvenience that pales in comparison to the sacrifice made by those brave Americans at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the fields of Pennsylvania on September 11.

For older Americans this is the second Day of Infamy that they have lived through, the first being December 7, 1941. These Americans that Tom Brokaw aptly describes as the Greatest Generation, know all too well the meaning of sacrifice and resolve. No generation has shouldered more proudly the rise of our nation to world power. No generation has borne such a heavy burden. None stands more committed than they do to stand with the Commander-in-Chief during this struggle. They know intuitively - as John Kennedy, the first President of the generation born in this century did, that we must put our nation above ourselves.

With patriotic fervor and resolve they stand committed today to face any challenge, conquer any foe, and sustain a nation which is free of terror for their children and grandchildren. Proud veterans know that this is a match that cannot be postponed, and to comfort the young, we can return to Roosevelt's words that we have "nothing to fear but fear itself." Our veterans are in every sense of the word magnificent citizens and

role models.

They have given much and asked little in return. They hear all the platitudes and promises. They are celebrated in speeches, in books, and in the movies. It is hard therefore, to return to the district, look them in the eye and explain that there is still no prescription drug relief for older Americans. To explain that we are exhausting the Social Security surplus, not only to fight Osama Bin Laden, but also to provide corporate tax cuts. It is hard to look them in the eye as they travel to Canada for their prescription drugs, while the majority in Congress rolls back the "Alternative Minimum Tax" on corporations. Even amidst what must be hurtful to them, they never waiver; they stand by their nation, their flag, and their beliefs, prepared to sacrifice yet again for the Nation they love.

Living out their lives in dignity is all older Americans ask; platitudes and promises don't heat their homes, put food on the table or pay for the medications needed to sustain their lives. Their generation believed you should be known by your deeds, not by words that translate into empty promises.

There will be numerous speeches given on Veterans' Day exalting the brave men and women of our Nation. Wreaths will be placed at memorials, and people will gather in solemn remembrance, and firm resolve.

When we attend parades, speeches and memorials, take a long look in the eyes of those veterans. We stand on their shoulders, the benefactors of their sacrifice and accomplishments.

They are prepared to see this second day of infamy through till justice is served. If only Congress would respond with this same resolve for them; the resolve to see their twilight years lived out in dignity; the resolve to provide them with affordable prescriptions here at

home. If only Congress would show the willingness to sacrifice a corporate tax cut, in order to preserve a life, to heat a home and to make a nutritious meal possible. If only there were the resolve to preserve Social Security and Medicare - the programs that have helped sustain our seniors.

The shame is that it wouldn't take much. It will mean rolling back only a portion of an enormous tax cut, an adjustment affecting only the nation's wealthiest one percent. However, realistically in a time of shared sacrifice, what American wouldn't put the health and healing of its elders above their rebate?

This is an unprecedented opportunity: the nation stands united behind the President and Congress to root out terrorism. It is clear that both the will and the resolve is there, and that we will prevail.

We will not be a stronger nation however, if we do so on the backs of our seniors. We must stop the frenzy at the tax cut trough for the few, and honor the sacrifices of the many. On Veterans' Day, we can look them in the eye, tell them that along with eliminating the fears and anxiety created by terrorism, we will eliminate the anxiety and stress of choosing between life-saving prescriptions and heating their homes.

If spoken words from Washington are not enough, and they usually are not - then it is up to Mr. Brokaw and others in the media to do for the Greatest Generation what Edward R. Murrow's documentary "Harvest of Shame" did for poverty.

It's up to these voices beyond the Congress, unfortunately, to move this nation, it is up to voices beyond the beltway to shame the Congress into doing more than recite platitudes and promises. If we are to keep faith with our fathers, we need to act - and act now - on behalf of those we are sworn to serve.